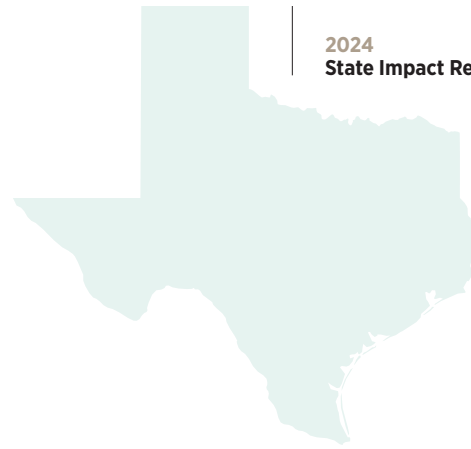


Audubon Onward!

AUDUBON'S IMPACT IN TEXAS
2024



Audubon Onward!



DEAR FRIENDS,

This report invites you to look more closely at Audubon’s collective impact over the past year to protect birds and the places they need in Texas. *Audubon Onward!* provides important updates and conservation gains through our forward-looking plan to address the mounting challenges to biodiversity and ecosystems—issues that not only impact birds but people and the planet, too. The following pages underscore an urgency of now, and Audubon’s bold response.

Over the past half-century, we have lost 3 billion birds in North America—an alarming trend skewed heavily toward migratory species. This precipitous loss is a powerful statement about the condition of our planet and a harbinger of things to come if we don’t act strategically and decisively.

In Texas, birds such as the Golden-cheeked Warbler are facing a precarious future due to the accelerating effects of climate change. This iconic species is one of 28 highly vulnerable species highlighted in Audubon’s *Survival by Degrees* climate science report, all of which are at risk of disappearing from the Lone Star State within our lifetimes unless we significantly enhance our efforts to address these critical threats.

It is this urgency that led us to launch our *Flight Plan*, Audubon’s bold five-year strategic plan, which codifies our evolution into a truly hemispheric organization.

***Flight Plan* is about protecting birds, and at the same time, protecting people and our planet by advancing a generation-shaping agenda to the forefront of conservation.**

Audubon’s *Flight Plan* is essential for Texas, where diverse landscapes support numerous bird species. *Flight Plan* advances a generation-defining vision in conservation that benefits both Texas wildlife and the health of our communities.

Beyond boundaries and across vast distances, most migratory birds only spend a fraction of their annual cycle in our state. To protect them, we need to literally meet them where they are. By studying their migrations and extensive breeding ranges, we can zero in with precision to address the dizzying array of conservation challenges they face.

It is your support and our shared impact in Texas that will allow us to achieve hemispheric outcomes—this is how we will bend the bird curve.

Thank you and onward!

Lisa Gonzalez
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BIRDS TELL US. THIS IS HOW WE LISTEN.

Thanks to game-changing science and new digital technologies, we are narrowing knowledge gaps that have long plagued the world of bird conservation. The Swainson’s Thrush, for example, makes an annual migratory journey from the Boreal Forests of Alaska and Canada to Argentina—a round

trip of nearly 20,000 miles. Earlier this year, a tagged Swainson’s Thrush originating in Panama’s Palo Seco Forest Reserve—a single bird spread against the mammoth skies of the Western Hemisphere—flew past an Audubon-installed Motus tower located in Texas at Mitchell Lake Audubon

Center on its month-long trek to British Columbia. MOTUS towers capture critical data revealing secrets of birds’ migratory adventures, giving new revelations and insight into where, when, and how long they seek habitats needed to provide safe rest and food.



Golden-cheeked Warbler.
Photo: Melissa Cheatwood/Audubon Photography Awards

Audubon’s *Flight Plan*:

A Powerful and Dynamic Story of Migratory Science, Climate Action, and Community Building

THE SCIENCE IS CLEAR. We have a unique opportunity to make a positive impact for birds, people, and the planet. While challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss are significant, we can bend the bird curve together. The window of opportunity remains open—if we seize this moment and act now.

The most ambitious strategic effort in our history, Audubon’s *Flight Plan* establishes our vision for shaping a world where birds and people thrive, elevating Audubon as a global conservation leader. *Flight Plan* sets five-year milestones in key areas to track progress towards our long-term vision to ‘bend the bird curve,’ in other words, to halt and reverse the alarming decline of birds. Our recognition of the interconnectedness of people, place, and climate led to the development of four milestones we intend to reach over the next five years: Habitat Conservation, Climate, Policy, and Community Building.

MILESTONES:

Flight Plan harnesses the full power of Audubon—including on-the-ground staff across the Western Hemisphere, centers and sanctuaries, and local chapter partners—by focusing on a set of shared outcomes for greater collective impact towards our vision.

HABITAT CONSERVATION

Using science to identify, protect, and conserve 300 million acres of bird habitat across the Americas

CLIMATE ACTION

Deploying 100 gigawatts of renewable energy and storing 30 billion tons of carbon through natural climate solutions

POLICY LEADERSHIP

Pairing diplomacy with advocacy to develop and implement bird-friendly solutions

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Creating a diverse network of bird lovers working together to advance our shared vision

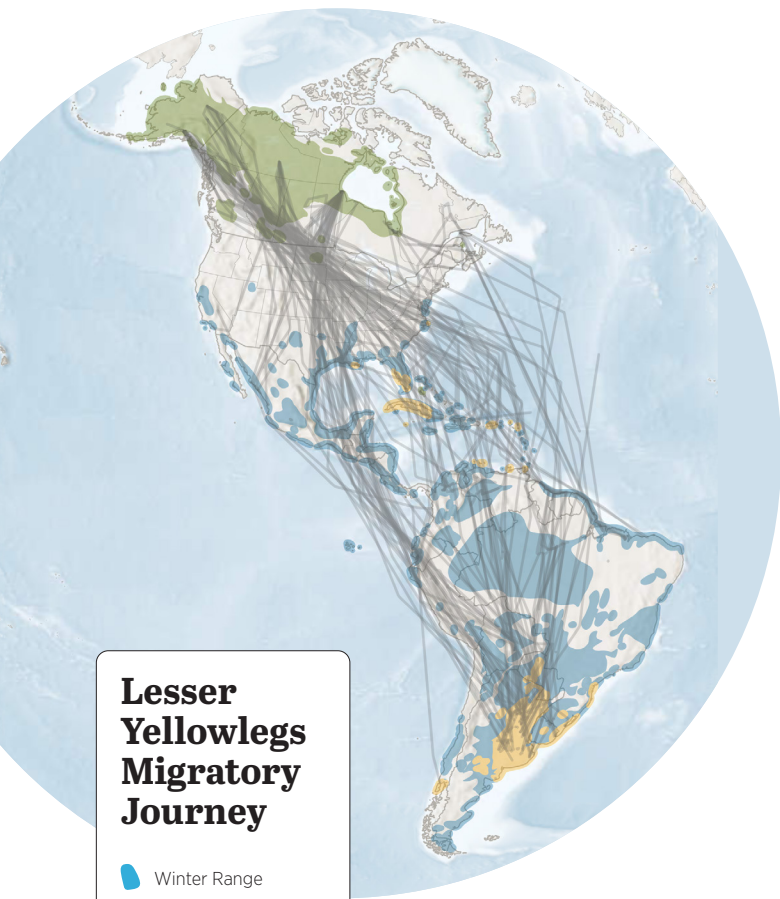
AUDUBON’S HEMISPHERIC APPROACH TO CONSERVATION directs our efforts to the places where birds need us most and to all the places they call home; their seasonal migration across the Western Hemisphere means Audubon also works from boreal Canada to Texas to Chile and beyond.

In the past year, we have made progress towards our milestones—much of which has touched down in our state—and developed operational plans to continue driving this work forward.

Guided by our *Flight Plan*, we are engaging in conservation on 116,650,000 acres across the Americas and influencing 50 renewable energy generation and transmission projects totaling 34 gigawatts—enough energy to power roughly 25 million homes.

HIGHLIGHTS OVER THE PAST YEAR INCLUDE EFFORTS TO:

- **Launch Audubon’s Conservation Ranching Program in Wisconsin,** building on our success in fourteen other states where more than 100 ranches covering nearly 3 million acres have earned status as Audubon Certified bird-friendly land.
- **Fund seven new projects for protected areas in Perú and six in Bolivia** through *Conserva Aves*, totaling over 1.9 million acres.
- **Break ground on the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion, the single-largest ecosystem restoration project in U.S. history;** this project will restore and strengthen up to 28,000 acres of wetlands in Louisiana, providing climate resiliency benefits to local communities.
- **Begin new engagement on a \$10 billion transmission project** spanning seven Midwestern states representing up to 20 gigawatts.
- **Deliver 10,000 acre-feet of water to benefit Great Salt Lake and Jordan River** through local partnerships and co-management of the Great Salt Lake Watershed Enhancement Trust.
- **Convene 11 Indigenous Guardians and leaders from five First Nations,** key partners on our work in Canada, at Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine for knowledge exchange and training opportunities.



Lesser Yellowlegs Migratory Journey

- Winter Range
- Summer
- Year-Round
- Journey of a Tracked Bird

Audubon’s online Bird Migration Explorer provides a clearer-than-ever look at bird migration and the incredible journey of individual species. Here we see how Lesser Yellowlegs in the Great Plains require us to work beyond our borders to ensure it remains safe and healthy throughout its annual cycle.

Through innovative strategies and programs, Texas is at the forefront of Audubon’s *Flight Plan*, amplifying our voice and implementing leading-edge conservation efforts. We are aligning statewide initiatives with the hemispheric vision to identify connected, climate-resilient places where we are focusing our efforts for the greatest impact.

Audubon’s Work in Texas. Unified by the Power of Birds.

Through our *Flight Plan*, we commit to achieving significant milestones that will demonstrate measurable impact on the climate and biodiversity crises. Your partnership and support helped us accomplish the following work over the past year.



→ Audubon Conservation Ranching (ACR) **promoted sustainable land use across 87,000 acres of working lands** in Texas. Range ecologists worked with landowners to create habitat management plans and connected them to the financial and technical resources. More than **420,000 Texas acres are currently progressing toward ACR certification** and adoption of bird-friendly practices. Early analysis indicates grassland bird abundance increased 36 percent at the first 35 monitored and certified ranches.

HABITAT CONSERVATION

Conserving quality, connected, and climate-resilient bird habitat

→ Audubon Texas’s coastal conservation programs **preserved vital habitat along 367 miles** of the Gulf coastline. We partnered with local organizations to **manage and monitor 175 rookery islands** essential for nesting waterbirds. These islands are critical nesting and breeding habitat—more than 400 species of birds rely on Texas’s coastline for breeding, rest, and replenishment every year.

Whooping Cranes.
Photo: Elaine Brackin/Audubon Photography Awards

→ Audubon Texas has created the **Whooping Crane Conservation Decision Support Tool**, a pivotal resource that will enhance collaboration among partners and inform future conservation initiatives. This tool is crucial for the protection of Whooping Cranes on the mid Texas Coast, as it will facilitate data-driven decision-making and habitat management opportunities with landowners, ensuring the survival and recovery of this iconic species.



CLIMATE ACTION

Accelerating renewable energy and restoring forests, grasslands, and wetlands

→ Audubon engaged with renewable energy developers, government agencies, and local partners on **536 megawatts of new and proposed wind and solar projects in Texas** to ensure that these projects avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on birds and the places they need.

→ Audubon Texas is actively collaborating with and convening multiple coalitions of conservation organizations and the renewable energy industry to **promote best practices for the responsible siting of wind, solar, and transmission infrastructure.**

Double-crested Cormorant.

Photo: Jill Clardy/Flickr (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Brown Pelican.

Photo: Cami Marculescu/
Audubon Photography Awards



POLICY LEADERSHIP

Advancing our *Healthy Birds, Healthy Planet* policy agenda

→ Audubon Texas **rallied local chapters and members to support the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act**, which successfully passed both the House and Senate, marking a significant victory for bird conservation.

→ During the off-year for the Texas legislature, we hosted **Bird-Friendly webinars** to offer valuable insights to our members and partners on conservation practices, renewable energy initiatives, and the significance of protecting vital habitats.



 **COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Working together across the hemisphere to advance our shared vision

→ The **Lights Out, Texas!** campaign, designed to reduce light pollution and building collisions for migrating birds, welcomed **four new communities**, increasing the total to 19. This campaign gained notable media attention, **reaching an audience of 222 million**. Texas receives more migratory species than any other state, with more than 2 billion birds—95 percent of all neo-tropical migratory bird species—relying on our state for safe passage.

→ Communities in the **Bird City Texas** program—with populations totaling more than six million Texas residents—have collectively undertaken over **260 actions** focused on conservation, education, and threat reduction to protect birds and their habitats. Situated in Audubon priority geographies, these communities have **restored more than 3,000 acres of habitat**, successfully removing invasive species, planting thousands of native plants and trees, and refurbishing wetlands. Education plays a crucial role in promoting bird-friendly practices, with each Bird City hosting outreach programs and disseminating information through newsletters, speaker series, and social media.

→ **Audubon Conservation Action Centers in Dallas and San Antonio** educated and engaged over **40,000 individuals** through a variety of community programs, free admission initiatives, and education partnerships with local schools. Most Texas centers are in underrepresented communities and provide many students and communities a critical connection to conservation and the outdoors. Notable highlights include:

- **Trinity River Audubon Center** in Dallas implemented a community engagement program that provided transportation assistance and free entry, successfully serving over 11,000 visitors. These initiatives significantly improved accessibility, enabling a wider audience to enjoy educational and outdoor experiences. As a result, the Center saw a 20 percent increase in visitor numbers, demonstrating the positive impact of inclusive programming on community involvement.
- The Plants for Birds program at **Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center** in Cedar Hill empowers communities by providing the resources to create urban habitats for birds using native plants. These habitats offer essential food, water, and shelter while bridging fragmented natural spaces. The program’s success is clear: native plant sales doubled from the previous year, with more than 6,600 plants sold—highlighting strong community engagement and a rising demand for bird-friendly environments.
- **Mitchell Lake Audubon Center** in San Antonio is making impactful progress as an urban demonstration project in a growing community, successfully restoring 15 acres of grassland with an ambitious plan to expand to 50 acres by 2025.

Native plant restoration. Photo: Port Aransas Parks and Recreation Department

We are deeply grateful for your continued commitment to Audubon and our mission to protect birds and the places they need—in Texas and beyond. In the first year of *Flight Plan*, we have made significant progress towards our habitat and climate milestones. We could not have gained such momentum without you. The challenge before us is clear. Act now or risk a future with skies silenced with loss. With your help, we will bend the bird curve and make a sustainable impact for birds across the hemisphere. **This is our moment.**

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Northern Bobwhites.
Photo: Lillian Beasley/
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Cover: Lesser Yellowlegs.
Photo: Evi Meyer/Audubon
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